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ABSTRACT

To give established African women writers whose work is available in Africa, Europe, and the Americas more exposure for teachers, literary scholars, librarians, and readers of ethnic literature, a study was undertaken which resulted in a bio-bibliography. After an overview on contemporary African literature, the 20 female authors are listed alphabetically in the bio-bibliography, and for each author there is a biographical sketch, a short summary about each author's works and themes, information on critical reception to the author, a list of honors and awards received, a bibliography of the author's works, information on any studies about the author, and a list of the country of origin of each author. All the authors write in English, and the list is limited to authors of novels, poems, short stories, and plays. (NKA)

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Twenty Contemporary African Women Writers: A Bio-bibliography

by
Wilma L. Jones

Abstract

Women writers are beginning to make an impression in world literature today. Recently, many books have published about African-American women writers, and they would sometimes recognize a few African women. Many African writers are quite known today, but most of them are male. This article is about African women who are quite established as writers in their various countries. Their works are available not only in Africa, but in Europe and the Americas. This article is written to give their work more exposure to school teachers, literary scholars, librarians, and readers of ethnic literature, worldwide. Included in this bio-bibliography about these African writers are: a biographical sketch of the author, a short summary about the author's works and themes, information on critical reception of the writer, honors and awards, bibliography of the author's works, and studies about the person, if any.

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TWENTY CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN WOMEN WRITERS:
A BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY

by
Wilma L. Jones

African literature emerged in a flood during the sixties in a time when many African countries were gaining their independence. Several books by Africans had been published before this era, but they were mainly autobiographical works in either poetry or prose. The onset of African writings in the fifties and sixties began with contributions by male authors such as Peter Abrahams (South Africa), Chinua Achebe (Nigeria), Mongo Beti (Cameroun), Camara Laye (Guinea), Thomas Mofolo (Lesotho), Sembene Ousmane (Senegal), Leopold Senghor (Senegal), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Kenya). These authors are now well-established and quite famous in Africa, and worlwide, too.

On the other hand, the fifties and sixties show very few literary works produced by women. Almost all of their works when submitted were either ignored, misplaced or lost, or heavily edited and published as short stories in anthologies, journals, or local newspapers. Rarely were any published as an individual work of art. It was not until the seventies (ironically, the era of women's liberation), that the writings of African women began to be recognized. Two decades later, they have gained more recognition in Africa, but are barely known worldwide.

Although I am African, I only discovered the writings of African women after obtaining a B.A. in English Literature. My curiousity about their writing began after I read The House of the Spirits (1985), a novel by Isabel Allende, a Chilean born writer. Her writings about her culture brought back memories of similar images of my African culture and way of life, and it made me wonder if there was any literature like this written by African women. Oddly enough, many students boast of having taken a course in African literature, but none could come up with the name of a female writer. Other cultured readers are quick to cite Isak Dineson (Out of Africa), Elspeth Joscelyn Huxely (Flame Trees of Thika), Nadine Gordimer (1992 Nobel prize winner for literature), and Beryl Markham (West with the Night). These are not African women writers. They are Europeans who have lived in Africa and have written about there experiences through fiction. In addition, the exposure of some of their works through films or PBS television series has greatly enhanced their readership.

If the literature by African women has been around for over two decades, what is keeping their works from being exposed to the world? Trying to dig up materials published by African women proved almost impossible, very difficult and frustrating. To begin with, I knew very few names of African women writers, and for others, I had to comb through secondary sources female sounding names. In addition, most African names are not easily distinguishable by gender, which made it even more difficult for me to pick out the female writers in these secondary sources.

Nevertheless, I was amazed to find that there were, indeed, many African women writers of poetry; novels and plays for children, young adults and adults; and critical or journalistic essays.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this study is to compile a biography-bibliography on those African women writers, whose works are available in the United States, in order to give their works a greater exposure to not only Africans, but also to teachers, literary scholars, librarians, and of course readers of ethnic literature. The books In Their Own Voices (James 1990) and Bibliography of African Women Writers and Journalists (Berrian 1985) gave me the idea of doing a bio-bibliography on African women writers. No other secondary source, apart from these last two books mentioned above, is specifically designed to provide information on who these African women are and how much they have accomplished as authors exists at this time.

As early as the eighties, more works by African women were being published separately and not as part of other works. The critics who used to ignore them can no longer afford to do so. One aspect that has helped to boost their writings is the number of publishing houses (owned by Africans) that surfaced in the eighties in Africa. This increased their proximity to publishers and decreased the incidence of lost scripts. In recent times, four African women writers own their own publishing firms, and they are known to concentrate on encouraging other women to

publish and also to produce materials for primary and secondary school children.

In the early eighties, also, more reviews about African women's literature began to appear in distinguished journals such as Booklist, New York Times Review, West Africa, The New Yorker, School Library Journal, World Literature Today, Jeune Afrique, Journal of Commonwealth Literature, MS Magazine, and Library Journal. The words of African women writers were beginning to be heard through out the continent, slowly.

On the other hand, the well-established African men writers have not only been exposed in coverage by reviews, critical or journalistic essays, bibliographies, but they have also had the pleasure of having other writers write books about them and their works. Four works that come to mind are The Writings of Peter Abrahams (Ogungbesan 1979), An Introduction to Writings of Nguqi (Killam 1980), Achebe's World: the Historical and Cultural Context of the Novels of Chinua Achebe (Wren 1980) and A Dance of Masks: Senghor, Achebe, Soyinka (Peters 1978). I have yet to find such works written in the same way about African women writers.

Recognizing the meagre exposure of African women writers, I saw a need to compile a bio-bibliography about these women, one that will include the following for each person: a biographical sketch of the author, a short summary about the author's works and themes, information on critical reception of the writer, honors and awards, bibliography of the author's works, and

studies about the person, if any. A content analysis of informational material from secondary sources such as biographies, bibliographies, and interviews and book jackets, as well as primary sources available, is the methodology most appropriate for this research. Each work by an author listed in this paper will be examined (i.e., to glean information from the title page, book jacket, and preface, if any), and summarized, if read. My intent is to bring out the quality of each author's talent, and, in addition, give a brief account of what they have attained in their unique life, so far.

This bio-bibliography, I hope, will contribute to the few reference works that exist in libraries on African literature today. Those in the libraries today are usually selective in the women they include. Although this research covers only the African women writers who write in English, this will be one of the first works devoted to only African women writers available through major secondary sources.

I have limited my research to only twentieth century writers of works written in English, and included only those authors of short stories, novels, poems, and plays. Authors of folklore and journalistic or critical essays are excluded.

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One of the first secondary sources I consulted for information about works by African women was Donald Herdeck's <u>African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing 1300-1973</u>

(1973). An appendix devoted to African women writers in this book directed me to thirty-one female writers.

A Reader's Guide to African Literature (Zell 1983), the next source I consulted, aspires to be a comprehensive annotative bibliography of African works by African authors, south of the Sahara, writing in English and French. Included, also, are reference materials, critical works, anthologies, and a selective biography. This second edition includes eleven women authors out of eighty-five African authors. In the first edition, which was published in 1971, only four women were included out of fifty-two African authors.

Who's Who in African Literature (Jahn, et al. 1972) is a biographical source that pointed me to the same African women writers found in African Authors. African Literature in the Twentieth Century (1975) by O.R. Darthorne is a work of critical analysis of African literature. It was the first work that I came across in which four works by African women are discussed.

With a more intensive search, using Wilsonline (H.W. Wilson Company's Library Literature Online) and the MLA Bibliography on CD-ROM, I found four more books rich in discussing the works by African women. The first encountered was Women Writers in Black Africa (1981) by Lloyd W. Brown, which gives a solid introduction to the writings of African women writers and works and a detailed description of five novelists and their works. Oladele Taiwo's Female Novelists of Modern Africa (1984) devotes separate chapters to six major African women novelists, with one

additional chapter about six other lesser-known women writers. Bibliography of African Women Writers and Journalists (1985), compiled by Brenda F. Berrian, is a checklist bibliography and the most up-to-date source of poems, short stories, drama, journalistic essays, and folklore published. In Their Own Voices: African Women Writers Talk (1990) is also a great work by Adeola James, who has recorded in writing the interviews of fifteen writers, with each interview enhanced by a short biography. The Feminist Companion to Literature in English (FCLE) is yet another work published in 1990 which gives a 500-word biographical sketch on women writers from all over the world, dating from the middle ages to the present. This biographical work includes 20 women from Africa--English writers as well as French and Portuguese writers.

To complete my search in digging up all these African women writers, I scanned through the cummulative index of Contemporary Authors (1992) for names I now knew, thanks to my previous searches. I found the names of six women listed in the index.

UPDATE

While browsing in a bookstore about a year after my research was completed, I stumbled upon the book Daughters of Africa (1992) edited by Margaret Busby. It's subtitle led me to believe that all the research I had done was for nothing. The size of the book was intimidating, over 1,000 pages, yet I bought it as I was dying to know what this author found out that I did not. As

it turns out, the book covers women of African descent, thus including African-Americans, Caribbeans, and South Americans, whereas I concentrated on only those African women who were born and raised in Africa and only those who wrote in English. Also, my article covers six important authors who do not appear in Busby's book, namely Yema Lucilda Hunter, Barbara Kimenye, Muthoni Likimani, Anne Matindi, Asenath Odaga, Ifeoma Okoye, and Miriam Were.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

I found over 40 African women authors who have published in English, many of whom have only one work published and very little information on their background was found. There are others who write in French or Portuguese and some of their works have been translated. Mariama Ba, a Senegalese, now deceased, is one such example. She is internationally known for her French novel, Une Si Longue Lettre (1979) (So Long A Letter), that has been translated into English and other languages. There are others who write in their mother-tongue only, thus limiting their literature to only those who understand the target language in which they write. One such person is Penina Muthondo, who has written eight plays in Kiswahili. She is highly thought of in Tanzania, yet unknown outside Tanzania.

English is a second language to all of these African women authors. It is the language that is most accessible to people throughout the continent but not to as many people in their own

immediate environment. Today, most of their works are being translated into their own languages, as well as other European languages.

Flora Nwapa (Nigeria), Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Asenath Odaga (Kenya), Efua Sutherland (Ghana), Buchi Emecheta (Nigeria), Rebeka Njau (Kenya), Grace Ogot (Kenya), and Bessie Head (South Africa/Botswana) are the most talked about women writers from Africa. They have published since the early sixties and have continued to publish throughout the eighties and into the nineties. Even Bessie Head, who passed away in 1986, has had three works published post-humously, the latest being Gestures of Belonging (1991). Some of them are internationally known, and many have won several literary prizes for their works. These women have paved the way for others who are writing now. Flora Nwapa, Asenath Odaga, and Buchi Emecheta have established publishing firms of their own. Nwapa, for instance, has two publishing centers; one is set up for printing only children's literature and the other for adult fiction.

Many of these women are not only authors; they are also mothers, wives, teachers, directors, publishers, and (surprisingly) public servants. All of them have earned at least a B.A. in English or a diploma in Education, many of whom graduated with Honours. Some have done a Master's degree and a few have earned their Ph.D. In their writings, the central characters are usually female. Naturally, their first works are autobiographical, mainly consisting of firsthand experience of

being women in the African society. The characters vary from the assertive to the submissive woman, and themes include sexual abuse, incest, racism, polygamy, the hardship of raising children on one's own, traditional practices, lesbianism, etc. These are sensitive themes that these bold African women dare to treat in their prose or poetry.

In examining most of their works, I found that there is an eventual, (but natural), turn towards writing literature for children. Juvenile literature with African characters and an African setting is an area that has been neglected. Snow White is probably the most popular story for children in every part of the world. Certainly the moral of the story is meaningful to every child; however, the concept of snow is baffling to African children who, for most, will never see snow in their lifetime. Hence, these women see a need for stories with similar moral issues to be written with situations familiar to African children.

Below is a brief analysis of each of the lives of 20 contemporary African women writers who have broken through this male dominated field and are being read and heard throughout the world. Two appendices follow after the bibliography to the manuscript: Appendix A lists a bibliography of each authors work in chronological order of publication, and Appendix B lists the authors and their country of origin.

AMA CHRISTIANA ATA AIDOO is one of the best known African woman

writers today. She is famous for writing the plays Dilemma of a Ghost, which was published in 1965, and Anowa in 1969, the latter being the most produced play in Africa today. Aidoo has not restricted her writings to just plays. She has written two novels, several poems and short stories--enough to publish a collection for each--and lately, she has turned to writing for young people.

Aidoo was born in Ghana in 1942 and all her writings are set in Ghana. She earned her B.A. Honours in English from the University of Ghana, in Legon. Later, she had the opportunity to study creative writing at Stanford University. She has taught English and African Literature in the United States, Kenya, and Zimbabwe. Her literary career began with winning a short story competition organized by Ibadan's Mbari Club "No Sweetness Here" from Black Orpheus. In 1986, she won the Nelson Mandela Award for her collection of poems entitled Someone Talking to Someone (1985).

Aidoo's works are generally described as being sad and tragic. Her characters are frequently disillusioned, and her themes include women who insist on having a voice in decisions with their husbands, strong-headed women, and conflicts between Africans and Africa.

Works of Aidoo are certainly the most analyzed, mainly because of her themes and unconventional form of writing both in fiction and in poetry. She gained immediate critical recognition with Dilemma of a Ghost and has kept a captivated audience since.

Although all her works are written in English, Aidoo is known to use phrases from Akan, Ewe, and Pidgin-English in her poetry and prose. At the time of this writing, she is teaching African Literature at Oberlin College in Ohio, and is an member of the International Advisory Board for Ms Magazine.

ZAYNAB ALKALI is one of the first novelists to emerge from Northern Nigeria. She won the Association of Nigerian Authors' (ANA) award in 1985 for her first novel The Stillborn (1984). This brought her immediate recognition to the Nigerian masses, as well as some international attention; recently, parts of The Stillborn has been translated into German. Her second novel, The Virtuous Woman (1987) is a thriller written for adolescents. Both novels talk about life in Northern Nigeria, which is predominantly inhabited by Muslims. Her novels are mainly about family life, with recurring themes such as polygamy, urban dislocation and family loyalties, contemporary problems of broken marriages, and the bride-child and its consequences.

In an interview with Alkali, published in In Their Own Voices, she honestly describes her works in these words:

> I see my writing in the service of humanity, with special reference to Africa and the Third World. I strongly believe that whatever the theme, whatever the culture, basic human experience is the same. I may be biased, though, towards the general condition of women in the modern world. (James 1990)

Alkali is not only an author and a lecturer, she is also a wife and mother of five children. She was born in Gongola State,

Nigeria in the 1950s. She earned her B.A. from Amadu Bello University in 1973 and later earned her M.A. in African Literature in English, in 1979. She has been a principal of a school for girls and has lectured at Bayero University in Nigeria. Currently, she is teaching English and African literature at the University of Maiduguri, in Nigeria.

BUCHI EMECHETA, chosen as 1983's Best Young British Writer, is one of Africa's most dynamic female writers. She is a novelist, writer of children's literature, scriptwriter, publisher, and last but not least, a mother of five children. Emecheta gained her recognition when she won the Jock Campbell Award in 1978 for her fourth novel, The Slave Girl (1977).

Emecheta has written several plays for radio and television, numerous articles for learned journals and magazines, thirteen novels, four children's literature books, and an autobiography. Her themes are about contemporary Nigerian women and their victimization at home and abroad, sexual abuse, traditional values in the changing urban world, incest, issues of survival, class status, and hardship of being a "second-class citizen in England. Her works have been translated into fourteen languages, and she is the proud owner of the publishing house in London, Ogwugwu Afor Company (named after an Igbo goddess).

Buchi Emecheta was born in Yaba, Nigeria, in 1944. She studied Sociology at the University of London, and consequently has used many sociological concepts in her writings. In 1980,

she was appointed Senior Research Fellow in the Department of English and Literature Studies at the University of Calabar in Nigeria. She is also a Fellow at the University of London and a member of the Advisory Council to the British Home Secretary on Race and Equality.

Buchi Emecheta writes fiction full time now, and most of her work is being drawn from personal experience. This is something she has always wanted to do since she left her husband, taking her four children with her, while pregnant with her fifth child. Two of her children's stories "Nowhere to Play" (1980) and "Titch the Cat" (1979) were inspired by two of her daughters.

Emecheta has not been shy in exploring the different approaches to novel writing. For instance, Destination Biafra (1981) is a historical novel and through out the years she has written and completed her autobiography, Head above Water, in 1986. Second-Class Citizen is to some extent an autobiographical novel as it tells the story of a young wife who struggles to support her four children and her husband, a student in London at the time. The heroine, Adah, who is the bread winner of the family is also being subjected to physical and verbal abuse by her husband to the point where she is forced into hiding with her four children. The Rape of Shavi (1986) is a science-fiction satire and Our Own Freedom (1981) is a photographic book on the Third World for which she wrote the script. Emecheta's advice to young African women who would like to write is as follows:

> You have to be determined. The first person you need to convince is yourself. If it is something within you, your

> own truth will come out. Your truth may not be my truth. If I am speaking my own truth the way I see it, I must be prepared to define it. That means having that belief in yourself and being prepared to write it as you see it. (James 1990)

BESSIE HEAD is one of Africa's best known women writers for writing about her personal experiences as a black South African woman--all of her works set in the small village of Serowe in Botswana. Her first three works are outstanding novels, When the Rain Clouds Gather (1966), Maru (1971), and a powerful autobiographical work, A Question of Power (1973).

Head published many short stories, essays, and sketches, and even after her death, three more of her works have been published. A number of short stories have appeared in anthologies and in magazines such as Encounter, Essence, and Black World. In 1975, MS published her short story, "Witchcraft" as one of their special features during International Women's Year. Her themes are about racism, corrupt traditional establishments, will power, survival, concern for women, power, and local histories of villagers.

For such a remarkable woman who has made a significant contribution in the African literary world, she lived a hard and intense life. She was born to a Scottish woman and a Zulu man in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, in 1937. She was taken from her mother at birth and was brought up by a coloured foster family until the age of 13, and then placed in a Durban mission orphanage where she received her secondary education and teacher

training. She worked briefly as a journalist for Drum magazine. She married a journalist and had a son. After she became an activist, she left her husband and took her son with her into exile in Botswana, as she would no longer tolerate the conditions of apartheid. It was in the refugee village of Serowe, Botswana that she began to write while working as a teacher and a gardener. She gained her citizenship as a Botswanian after living in Botswana for fifteen years. She was working on her autobiography when she died of hepatitis in 1986.

African American Writers such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have acknowledged their indebtedness to Bessie Head as their model and inspiration. Many of her short stories have been translated into German. She wrote over 40 short stories and four novels before her death, not to mention the other journalistic articles, essays, and reviews.

YEMA LUCILDA HUNTER is one of the few women in Sierra Leone known for her creative works published in English. Her first novel, The Road to Freedom, is a historical account of the resettlement of emancipated slaves in Africa by the British at the turn of the nineteenth century. The story is told by a teenage girl as she watches her family, amongst others, make the return journey to Africa from Nova Scotia. She tells of their struggle to build and establish a community amongst the other natives in the region, and how they learned to live as free citizens in the land

they had once been forced to leave behind.

Hunter has also collected and published the writings of two Sierra Leonean women who contributed to the literary world in the 19th century. The edited work is entitled Mother and Daughter: Memoires and Poems by Adelaide and Gladys Hayford (1983).

Hunter was born in 1943 in Freetown, Sierra Leone. She earned her B.A. in 1964 at the University of Reading, England. She went on to do a post-graduate diploma in Librarianship at North-Western Polytechnic in London which she completed in 1966. Later on, she earned a Master's degree in Philosophy at Loughborough University. Since then, she has worked as a librarian at the Sierra Leone Library Board, and in the Medical Library at the Connaught Hospital in Freetown. Currently, she holds an international position with the World Health Organization in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo. She is married and has two children.

BARBARA KIMENYE is a prolific writer of short stories, most of which are children's literature. She is most famous for her short stories about village life in Uganda, the collections of which are entitled Kalasanda (1965) and Kalasanda Revisted (1966). Her most famous children's story is "The Smugglers" (1966), and "The Winner" (1965) one which is found in most anthologies dealing with African literature. Her works, often, are satirical treatments about conflicts between traditional and modern values. For instance, "The Winner" is a delightful spoof

in which a remotely related widow intervenes to save a lottery winner from his greedy kinfolks.

Kimenye was born in Uganda in 1940. She has worked in government organizations in Uganda and also as a journalist for Uganda Nation, and in Nairobi for the Daily Nation.

Kimenye has been publishing short stories and children's stories since the mid-sixties. In 1967, she published "Moses," a short story about an irrepressible Ugandan boy. Since then, she has written more than twelve sequels to this book, thus establishing a captivating series of Moses' adventures for the young reader. "Gemstone Affair" (1978) and "Money Game" (1992) are among her latest works.

MUTHONI LIKIMANI was well known as a broadcaster until she turned to writing full-time. In the literary world she has published four novels, her most popular one being They Shall be Chastized (1974) which has been translated into German. It is clear from her writings that her interests lie in the various activities of women. Her latest work, Passbook Number F4927: Women and Mau Mau in Kenya (1985), examines the Mau Mau revolutionary war from the point of view of women's contribution.

Likimani, daughter of a reverend, was born and educated in Kenya and Great Britain. She has worked as a teacher, as a nutrition adviser, an educational broadcaster, an actress in the Swahili film, "Melvi," and was one of the first Kenyan women to be a program producer at the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, now

Voice of Kenya. Along with her writing career, she also manages an advertising and promotion business in Nairobi.

ANNE MATINDI is a nurse by profession, but also an author of children's literature. She is known in Kenya for her plays geared towards children in elementary school. The background of her stories is set in East Africa, and they are amusing stories about domestic animals, some of which are science-fiction. She and Cynthia Hunter wrote The Sun-Men and Other Plays (1971), plays written specifically for primary school children. She has written a short story in Swahili entitled, "Jua na Upepo" (1968).

MICERE GITHAE MUGO is a poet, playwright, and a scholar. Her collection of poems in Daughter of My people, Sing! (1976) brought her recognition while she was a university professor in Kenya. She has written two plays, one of which she collaborated with the famous playwright, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, in The Trials of Dedan Kimathi (1976).

Mugo's poems are ironic, passionate, and sometimes bitter. Many of them challenge youth to struggle for a new Africa. On the whole she expresses concern for people divided by post-colonialism, "commercialism, calculated opportunism, cut-throat materialism" (FCLE 1990) and a belief in women's strength. Mugo, not surprisingly, is a fully committed Marxist who has been in

exile from her homeland since 1982.

Micere Mugo was born in 1942 in Baricho, Kenya. She studied drama under Rebeka Njau (another African writer and artist) at the Alliance Girls High School. It was here that she began writing poems in Elizabethan style, some of which she published while at university. She earned her B.A. Honours in English and Philosophy in 1966 from the University of Makerere, Uganda. In 1973, she graduated from the University of New Brunswick, Canada, where she received her M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in literature with the completion of the play, The Long Illness of Ex-Chief Kiti (1976) and her dissertation of criticism entitled, Visions of Africa (1978). The latter contrasts the colonial-imperialist's view with the vision of insiders and those committed to the people.

Mugo claims to have been inspired by Okot p'Bitek's collection of Ugandan folk poetry and encouraged to write by Chinua Achebe and Eldred D. Jones. She won the best actress award at the Uganda Drama Festival at Makerere University. In her interview with Adeola James, she calls herself a Marxist who is concerned with the fate of Africa since independence and uses writing as a revolutionary weapon. Her call to African women writers is "to find ways and means of reaching the majority of our people, who are women, to speak for them" (James 1990). Her most recent publication is entitled Culture and Imperialism (1987). She now lives in Zimbabwe and is a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe.

REBEKA NJAU has been in the limelight ever since her prize-winning tragedy one-act play, The Scar (1965), was published in the journal Transition in 1963. She has written many short plays and short stories, many of which appear in The Hypocrite and Other Stories (1980). Her writings focus on women and they are, naturally, the strong and progressive central characters. Her first novel, Alone With the Fig Tree, which won the East African Committee Prize, remains unpublished. Her works show conflicts in post-independence and include themes of madness, violence, lust, magic, and lesbianism.

Rebeka Njau was born in 1932 in Kenya and comes from a big family of five sisters and seven brothers. She was educated at Alliance Girls High School and Makerere University where she earned a diploma in Education. She became a headmistress of a girls school and currently works in Nairobi as a researcher and editor with the Kenyan Council of Churches.

Njau considers her writings suitable for everyone, even though she writes with an African audience in mind. She is married to a Tanzanian artist and has two children.

FLORA NWAPA was Africa's first woman to publish a novel in Britain and gain an international reputation for her novel, Efuru (1966). Efuru was followed by Idu in 1970, both novels told from a woman's point of view. In these books, she portrays the harsh realities of the African society--marriage, mothercare, family

life, status of women, hierarchical structure of the Igbo society, the place of gods, and the maintenance of peace and order in tribal communities.

She also wrote many short stories which are in two collections, namely This is Lagos and Other Stories (1971) and Wives at War and Other Stories (1980). Her more recent works include topics such as polygamy, the African woman's changing needs, the atrocities of the war in Biafra, and domestic hardship. These works provide literature for the African and give the non-African reader an insight into the traditional life of a certain tribe in Nigeria, the indegenous Igbo culture.

Flora Nwapa, eldest of six children, was born in 1931 in Oguta, in eastern Nigeria. She earned her diploma in Education from Edinburgh University in 1957 and went on to receive her B.A. from the University College of Ibadan in 1958. She was married to an industrialist and had one son and two daughters--all three attorneys.

In her lifetime, Nwapa has many accomplishments, some of which include being a mother, novelist, publisher, and the Minister for Health and Social Welfare of the East Central State, 1970-75. She was also the owner of two publishing houses--"Flora Nwapa and Co.," which publishes juvenile literature and "Tana Press," which publishes adult fiction--both established in 1977. In 1975, she won the Distinguished Author Award in Nigeria for her contributions in authorship in publishing.

The concern for the economic independence of women is a

recurring theme in Nwapa's adult fiction. She believed that "If the Black woman is economically independent . . . whether she is in Africa, North America, or the Caribbean . . . she and her children will suffer less." (James 1990). Flora Nwapa recently passed away in October, 1993.

ASENATH BOLE ODAGA is a Kenyan novelist and playwright who writes both in English and in Luo. She gave up her career to devote her time fully to writing and run her publishing house, Lake Publishers & Enterprises, which was established in 1982. She has written several books and plays for adults and over eighteen short stories for children. Her first work, a short story, "Jande's Ambition," was published in 1966, and her first novel, The Shade Changes, was published in 1984.

Odaga is known in Kenya more for her other works which are on or about oral literature, a subject which is of great emphasis in the public schools in Kenya. Simbi Nyaima (1983), a play, and Ogilo Nungo Piny Kirom (1983) are two of her works published in the Luo language, and several others being prepared for publication. She has also translated folktales into Luo, her native language. Her literature, aimed at the new literates, tells them simple things about how to care for children. Odaga is a mother of four children.

Asenath Odaga was born in 1937 in Rarieda, western Kenya. She studied at the University of Nairobi and holds a B.A. Honours

in History, a diploma in Education in 1974 and an M.A. in Literature in 1981. She has been a headmistress of a girls school, worked as a curriculum developer with a church organization and also as a Research Fellow at the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi. She is an advocate of writing in one's own native language, and with her publishing house, she plans to help other writers publish in various languages and to produce textbooks for schools.

In the meantime, she has been commissioned to write juvenile literature by Heinemann Educational Books, Inc. Already, her short story, "The Villager's Son" is being used as a reader in the secondaray schools. Her oral literature written for children includes a fantasy entitled The Diamond Ring (1967) and Thu Tinda (1980). Her works from years of research on oral traditions include Oral Literature: A School Certificate Course (1982, co-author with K. Akivaga), Yesterday's Today: The Study of Oral Literature (1984) and Literature for Children and Young People in Kenya (1985). Her most recent work is Riana's Choice (1991) and her next project is to produce a Luo-English/ English-Luo dictionary.

GRACE OGOT is known in Kenya for her short stories, most of which are now in the collections Land Without Thunder (1968), The Other Woman and Other Stories (1976) and The Island of Tears (1980). Her stories have been easily "adapted for stage and are popular

in the cities and rural areas" (Taiwo 1984). Many of these short stories have appeared in magazines such as Black Orpheus, Presence Africaine, Transition, and East Africa Journal. She, like Asenath Odaga, is an advocate of writing in local languages and has published both in English and Luo. She is known in Kenya for her popular short stories, namely, "The Promised Land" (1966), "The Graduate" (1980), "The Other Woman" (1976), and "The Rain Came," the later which is often found in anthologies.

Ogot has written three novels, two of which are historical in nature, and they deal with the history of her people, the Luo. The first novel, In the Beginning, has a time span from about 97 A.D. to about 1300 A.D. and the second, Princess Nyilaak, spans from the period from about 1517 A.D. to about 1750 A.D.

Like many of the other women writers, Ogot is concerned about the role of a woman in the African society, and the impact of the western culture on African rural life. However, books are not the only medium of communications for her. She has worked in Kenya as a journalist, as a public relations officer for Air India of East Africa, and on Kenyan radio and television where she also taught the luo language. In politics, she was a delegate to the United Nation's General Assembly, 1975, a member of United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 1976, and also a member of parliament in Kenya.

Grace Ogot was born in 1930 in Butere, Kenya. She trained as a nurse in Uganda and later studied at St. Thomas' Hospital

for Mothers and Babies in London. She worked briefly as a script writer and broadcaster for the British Broadcasting Corporation Overseas Service in London before return home in 1960. Although she comes from a family of storytellers, it was her husband who "made her aware that she could write" and encouraged her to write short stories (Taiwo 1984). Ogot is married and has three children.

IFEOMA OKOYE is a novelist and a writer of children's stories. She has published six children's books and several English texts for children in secondary school. She won the Macmillan Children's Literature Prize for Village Boy in 1978 and later won the Nigerian Best Fiction Award in 1984 for her second novel, Men Without Ears (1984). She writes about how humans treat each other with themes that focus on corruption, scandals, ritual murders, and the problems of technological change.

Okoye was born in Umanchi, Nigeria. She earned her B.A. in English from the University of Nigeria at Nsukka. She is married and has five children. She has lectured in the English Department of Communication and Languages, and at the Institute of Management and Technology in Enugu. She runs a nursery school in Enugu. Popular short stories by Okoye are "No School for Eze" (1980) and "The Adventures of Tutu the Monkey" (1980).

MABEL SEGUN is a successful poet in Nigeria who has also published several books for children. She is a strong advocate for juvenile fiction and specifically writes for use in upper primary and lower secondary schools. She is widely known for her poems "Conflict" and "Impotence." Her poems have been published in Black Orpheus and Odu, in Swiss and German journals, and in American anthologies. Conflict and Other Poems (1986) is a collection of 40 poems that she has written during a span of three decades. These poems focus on themes that point out the ills of society, namely the black man's inhumanity to his brothers, rape by strangers, and incest.

"My Father's Daughter" (1965) was Segun's first short story. It was partly autobiographical and is about a woman looking back on childhood memories of growing up in a village where her strong and kind father was a clergyman.

Mabel Segun was born in 1938 in Ondo, Western Nigeria. She studied at the University College of Ibadan and at the same time worked as an editor of Hansard, the record of the West Nigerian Parliament. She earned a B.A. in English, and taught her way up the ladder to becoming Head of the Department of English and Social Studies and Vice Principal, at the National Technical Teacher's College in Yaba.

ZULU SOFOLA is one of Nigeria's highly respected playwrights who is also an accomplished musician and director. Many of her plays

have been produced not only for the stage but also for the television network in Western Nigeria since the seventies. They include the popular Wedlock of the Gods (1968), The Deer and the Hunter's Pearl (1969), and The Sweet Trap (1977). The topics of her plays extend from social and domestic comedy to historical tragedy in which the main character has committed an abominable crime and is in conflict with tradition. The themes focus on absurd legalism, societal greed, teenage stress, academic snobbery, and crime, as well the weight of tradition in women's lives. She also includes proverbs and phrases from other languages spoken in Nigeria, such as Yoruba, Igbo, or Pidgin English.

Sofola was born in 1938 in Issele-Uke in mid-Western Nigeria. She studied at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee, where she earned a B.A. Honours in English. In 1965, she completed her Masters degree in drama at the Catholic University of America and later her Ph.D. in Drama from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 1977. She has taught drama, written and produced plays for television, and also worked in an amateur theatre. In 1975, along with Flora Nwapa, she won the Distinguished Author's Award, which recognized her outstanding contribution in authorship in Nigeria.

Currently, Sofola is a professor and Head of the Department of Performing Arts at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. She is married to a Sociology professor and has five children.

EFUA T. SUTHERLAND is the most successful woman playwright in Ghana today, and she is committed to the role of the artist in communication. She has written many plays for both children and adults. She gained recognition in Ghana with the production of her first play Edufa (1966), which is about a loving wife who offers to die for her husband, who has sold his soul for wealth. Since then, she has written several plays, the most popular ones being Foriwa (1967) and The Marriage of Anansewa (1975).

In all her plays, she embellishes a feminist theme and uses her native language, Akan, in some of her writings. Sutherland is also a poet and has written over eight poems which have appeared in anthologies. "The Redeemed," one of her best, is about a venomous snake lying in wait for a beautiful woman.

Sutherland was born in 1924 at Cape Coast, Ghana. She was trained to be a teacher at Homerton College at Cambridge, and later studied linguistics at London University. She is married to an American and has three children.

Sutherland, together with her husband, founded The Experimental Theatre Players, now Ghana Drama Studio, in which they experimented with the integration of traditional African forms and European theatrical practices. Sutherland has also put together a children's drama group which performs throughout Ghana. Her main intention is to introduce children to the real excitement embeded in their own culture.

Sutherland has taught African literature at the Institute of African Studies in Ghana, where she established a Writer's

Workshop. She is also an active contributor to and co-founder of Okeyame: Ghana's Literary Magazine. Among her literary works are scripts written to accompany photographs of life in Ghana, namely Playtime in Africa (1962) and The Roadmakers (1961). The Roadmakers is a collection of photographs taken throughout the modern nation of Ghana which shows the contrast between the rural and urban, north and south, Moslem and non-Moslems, joy and sorrow, young and old, and more.

MIRIAM TLALI is the author of the powerful novel Amandla (1980) a book that was banned in South Africa within six weeks of its publication. This book records the violence of the white system against the unarmed population of the pupils' uprising in 1976 in Soweto, South Africa. Parts of her first novel, Muriel at the Metropolitan (1975) were also banned. It includes autobiographical material of her experiences as a black female working in the city and having to deal with the indifference of whites, or having to put up with inadequate facilities in order to keep out any job run by whites.

Tlali has also written other novels, as well as short stories. In her works, she examines working conditions, marriage problems, motherhood, poverty, poor housing, and city problems due to loss of tradition and human ruthlessness.

Miriam Tlali was born in Doornfontein, Johannesburg, in South Africa; however, she grew up in Sophiatown. She was

enrolled at Witwatersand University for two years to study Medicine until Blacks were barred from entering the university. She tried to continue her studies at Roma in Lesotho but had to quit due to financial difficulties. She returned to the city, where she completed a secretarial course and worked for awhile.

As a writer, she is devoted to speaking out for women and for her people. She has attended many international conferences, one being the conference on African Women and Literature. Her stories have been published widely and can often be found in many anthologies. Tlali is married and has two children. Currently, Tlali lives and writes in Johannesburg.

ADAORA LILY ULASI is the first woman in Nigeria to obtain a university degree in journalism, and the only one to write detective novels, so far. She has written four novels, the most recent one being The Man from Sagamu (1979). Her books are set in the colonized Igbo land, where she grew up, with fictional characters of the local people and colonial officers attempting to solve local crimes. Ulasi is also one of the first to write locally just for her own people, using Pidgin-English. Her first two novels, Many Thing You No Understand (1970) and Many Thing Begin For Change (1971) are written in Pidgin-English.

Adaora Ulasi was born in 1932 at Aba, in eastern Nigeria. She studied journalism at Pepperdine University and at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she earned her B.A.

degree. She has worked as a broadcaster at the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, and later at the British Broadcasting Corporation. For about four years, she was the editor of Woman's World in Nigeria, and later returned to England in 1976.

MIRIAM KHAMADI WERE is a novelist and biographer and is the author of the best-selling novel, The Eighth Wife (1972). She has written only four novels targeted towards the young adult/ adult group. Her novels are about the realities of growing up and relationships within one's family or with friends at school. Her themes focus on initiation and graduation into adulthood, cross-cultural marriage, tribal rivalries, and religious antagonisms.

Her first two novels, The Boy In Between (1969) and The High School Gent (1969) trace Namunyu's growing up from being the middle child who was too big to play with the little ones and too little to join the older ones. Later, he encounters girls in high school whom he find to be just as intelligent, determined and successful as himself. Her fourth book, Your Heart is My Altar (1980) centers around a protagonist who grows up in doubt in a world plagued by cultural and religious conflicts, and she dares to aspire to marry someone from another tribe.

Were was born in 1940 in Lugale, Kenya. She earned a B.S. from the University of Pennsylvania. She later enrolled as a Medical student at Makerere University, during which time she

wrote her first novel. Though women are not always the main characters in her novels, she is concerned about the changes for Kenyan women as urbanization occurs. In 1985, she presented papers on health issues at the Conference of Nairobi Decade of Women. She is also the author of a biography on the life of Margaret Owanyoni entitled, A Nurse With a Song (1978).

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Appendix A

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APPENDIX B

AUTHOR	COUNTRY
Ama Ata Aidoo	Ghana
Zaynab Alkali	Nigeria
Buchi Emecheta	Nigeria
Bessie Head	South Africa/Botswana
Yema Lucilda Hunter	Sierra Leone
Barbara Kimenye	Uganda
Muthoni Likimani	Kenya
Anne Matindi	Kenya
Micere Githae Mugo	Kenya/Uganda
Rebeka Njau	Kenya
Flora Nwapa	Nigeria
Asenath Bole Odaga	Kenya
Grace Ogot	Kenya
Ifeoma Okoye	Nigeria
Mabel Segun	Nigeria
Zulu Sofola	Nigeria
Efua T. Sutherland	Ghana
Miriam Tlali	South Africa
Adaora Ulasi	Nigeria
Miriam Were	Kenya